

What a Piping Judge Listens For

What do piping judges listen for?

It may be somewhat foolish for someone who is not a certified piping judge (and I'm not!) to try to provide a definitive answer, but the truth of the matter is that the principle role of the piping judge is to preserve the art-form. Consequently, judges are listening for "good piping" from a technical and musical viewpoint.

The judge will listen to the sound quality of the instrument: both tuning and timbre.

1. Are the drones tuned together and in tune with the chanter?
2. Is the chanter well balanced and in tune?
3. How is the tonal quality - full, or thin, or dull?

The judge will evaluate the technique and execution.

1. Are the embellishments and notes played accurately and precisely?
2. Is blowing steady throughout or does it degrade with time or during difficult passages?
3. Does the player have control of his instrument?
4. Are there "chokes" (i.e, the melody cuts out for a note or two) or "squeals" from the chanter?
5. Is the tune appropriate for the player's ability and the level of the contest?

The judge listens to the "music".

1. Does the player understand and play this type of tune correctly?
2. Does the music "flow"?
3. Is the interpretation correct?
4. Is this an appropriate "setting" of the tune?

A piping judge is not influenced by and does not assess the following: genealogical background, years of experience, connections to other pipers and individuals, pride, costume, dress (beyond enforcing minimum standards for the game), deportment, military rank, marching, weaponry, weather, the actions of others on the field, or anything else that isn't related to the music and sound of the bagpipe.